

"the coup de grace" by ambrose bierce essay sample

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“ The Coup De Grace” by Ambrose Bierce Essay Sample

American naturalism first began in 1893 with Stephen Crane’s *Maggie*.

Naturalistic writers usually write stories that mostly take place below the belt and show the sad, but true realities that take place in life. Through the story, naturalists stay present by using authorial intrusion to comment on events taking place. Naturalists also believe that one’s fate is determined by a combination of their environment, heredity, and the element of chance. Ambrose Bierce’s, “ The Coup De Grace,” is a good example of American naturalism.

The environment that Bierce chooses helps to express his theme. The story’s environment takes place on a battlefield after a recent battle. Many people are lying around hurt, suffering, and on their way to meet their maker. The reason Bierce chooses this type of environment is he is ultimately trying to make a case for allowing assisted suicide and show that the Captain’s actions were acceptable. Bierce chose the perfect environment to assist in supporting his theme.

The character heredity was designed to have a specific outcome. The three main characters were the Sergeant, Captain, and Major. The Major and the Sergeant were brothers serving in the war together. The Sergeant also had a relationship with the Captain. Even though they were not related by blood, many would consider them close enough to be brothers. The twist though is that between the Major and the Captain existed one of the fiercest rivals. The two absolutely hated each other and would love nothing more than to

see the other one dead. The Captain's motivation to kill the Sergeant was strictly out of love for his friend. He knew he was going to die soon and couldn't stand to watch his friend suffer on the ground wounded. The Major's motivation to kill the Captain though was due to his hatred for him. When he saw the Captain put his sword through his brother's chest, he ordered him to face a firing squad. If these characters were not related in this specific way, the outcome would have been different. Bierce's character heredity was designed to have a specific outcome.

Like a good naturalist, Bierce employs an element of chance and authorial intrusion. The element of chance in the story was the Major seeing the Captain kill his brother. The combination of the environment, character heredity, and the element of chance determined the Captain's final fate. If even one of the elements of the equation were different, the Captain's fate would have been different. In the story Bierce also uses A. I. to make his plea for mercy killing. The authorial intrusion in a naturalistic story is the most important part because it expresses the author's reason for writing the piece. The most important A. I. from "The Coup De Grace is, " For what, indeed? For that which we accord even the meanest creature without sense to demand it, denying it only to the wretched of our own race: for the blessed release, the rite of uttermost compassion, the coup de grace." Bierce's use of the element of chance and authorial intrusion makes his story very naturalistic.

Naturalistic stories are a big part of American literature. We've always had a fascination with the cruelties of life. Naturalistic stories give us a different

view of the world that is not discussed as much. These stories do often express a very important theme. Naturalistic stories are very important to us.